

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

FOR

A SOCCER BOARD GAME

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Embodiments of the invention relate to strategy-type games, and more specifically to strategy-type board games simulating soccer play. Although board
5 games have existed for some time, board games designed to simulate soccer play remain relatively rare. Furthermore, the soccer board games that do exist are either very complicated to understand, or do not provide a sufficient strategy component to the game play so as to retain a player's interest for longer periods of time.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is illustrated by way of example and not by way of limitation in the figures of the accompanying drawings, in which the like references indicate similar elements and in which:

Figure 1 illustrates one embodiment of a game board for use in connection
15 with the soccer board game of the present invention;

Figure 2 illustrates a soccer game board having organizational indicia indicated thereon in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the invention; and

Figures 3A-3B illustrate various team space occupation and corresponding
20 game piece movement scenarios, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION

The present invention describes a soccer board game. In the following detailed description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of embodiments of the present invention. However, those skilled in the art will understand that such embodiments may be practiced without these specific details. Reference throughout this specification to “one embodiment” or “an embodiment” means that a particular feature, structure, or characteristic described in connection with the embodiment is included in at least one embodiment of the invention. Thus, the appearances of the phrases “in one embodiment” or “in an embodiment” in various places throughout this specification are not necessarily all referring to the same embodiment or invention. Furthermore, the particular features, structures, or characteristics may be combined in any suitable manner in one or more embodiments. Lastly, the terms “comprising”, “including”, “having”, and the like, as used in the present application, are intended to be synonymous.

In accordance with one embodiment of the soccer board game, at least two players take alternating turns moving at least one game piece around a game board in accordance with a defined set of rules. In one embodiment of the soccer board game, the object of game play is to score the most goals through a repeated combination of moving a game piece and selectively deploying player tokens on unoccupied team spaces to indicate possession of that team space, landing on an action space and following an action designated by the action space or a chance card, and landing on an occupied team space and moving the game piece forward if the team space is occupied by a player token belonging to the current player, and

moving the game piece backward if the team space is occupied by a player token belonging to an opponent.

Figure 1 illustrates one embodiment of a game board for use in connection with the soccer board game of the present invention. As shown, the game board (10) represents a playing surface upon which a multitude of game spaces are defined. The game board (10) may represent either a physical playing surface, including both rigid and flexible playing surfaces, or a virtual playing surface, such as that which may be rendered by a computer or other electronic device. In the event the game board (10) represents a physical playing surface, at least two players take turns moving at least one physical game piece from one game space to another. In the event the game board (10) represents a virtual playing surface, at least two players take turns moving at least one virtual game piece from one virtual game space to another in response to user input received by a processing device e.g. via a user input device such as a keyboard, mouse, trackball and so forth.

In the illustrated embodiment of Figure 1, the game board (10) includes a first type of game space referred to as a team space (12), and a second type of game space referred to as an action space (13). Team spaces (12) represent game spaces that may either be occupied by a player (e.g. as indicated by the presence of a player token) or may be open (e.g. as indicated by the absence of a player token) at any given time for the duration of the game. Moreover, team spaces may be occupied by a player token belonging to a single player, or they may be occupied sequentially in time by player tokens belonging to different players. In one embodiment, when a player's game piece lands on an open team space, the player

is given an option to deploy a player token on that particular space so as to occupy the space, or to take no action effectively ending the player's turn. After the player deploys a player token, or in the event the player opts not to deploy a player token, game play typically passes to the next player/opponent.

5 In one embodiment, each player is initially provided with thirteen player tokens, which are intended to represent soccer players. Of those thirteen player tokens, nine tokens (referred to as regular tokens) represent regular soccer players, two tokens (referred to as star tokens) represent star soccer players, and two substitute tokens (referred to as substitute tokens) represent substitute soccer
10 players. In one embodiment, each of twenty-four team spaces defined on the game board (10) is associated with movement indicia (22) indicating a number of additional successive game spaces that the current player's game piece is to be moved if the team space is occupied by a regular player token and the game piece lands on the game space. In one embodiment, if the team space indicated (e.g.
15 landed on) by the game piece is occupied by a star soccer player (e.g. as indicated by a star token), the current player's game piece is moved twice the amount of successive game spaces indicated by the movement indicia associated with the game space. In one embodiment, the movement indicia represent numbers ranging from one to five, however other numeric, alphanumeric, and non-numeric movement
20 indicia may be used.

 In one embodiment, team spaces may be further associated with one or more organizations such as soccer clubs/teams corresponding to various skill and organizational levels of play including but not limited to a country level, professional

level, community, local and/or school levels and so forth. In one embodiment, the organizations are represented through additional indicia printed on corresponding team spaces. In one embodiment, the movement indicia associated with team spaces may correspond to each associated organization's relative ranking as

5 compared to other teams at the same organizational level. Figure 2 illustrates a soccer game board having organizational indicia indicated thereon in accordance with an alternative embodiment of the invention. More specifically, Figure 2 illustrates a game board (10') having team spaces adorned with organizational indicia (14) indicating which country a given team space (12) is associated with, as
10 well as movement indicia (22) that is assigned to each team space (12) based upon, for example, the associated country's subjective relative ranking in the World Cup. Alternatively, team spaces may be associated with particular soccer player/personalities and the movement indicia may be assigned based upon each respective player's abilities.

15 Since there are typically more team spaces on the game board (10) than there are player tokens to be deployed, and the movement indicia vary across the team spaces, it is possible for players to gain a strategic advantage over their opponent(s) by being selective as to which open space(s) the players opt to deploy their respective player tokens. Notwithstanding the strategy component involved, a
20 player may choose to deploy player tokens on team spaces that are associated with the game player's favorite soccer team and/or personality.

In contrast to team spaces, game piece movement on action spaces is not contingent upon whether a given action space is occupied by a player token, but

may be contingent upon the location of a player's game piece. Action spaces indicate one or more of a number of actions that a player may take in response to the player's game piece landing on a given action space. More specifically, action spaces may, direct players to move their game piece forward or backward by an indicated number of game spaces, move their game piece to a specified game space, take another turn, lose a turn, rest (e.g. end a turn), and draw a chance card.

In one embodiment, chance cards are used to increase the unpredictability of game play and to provide each player with a further opportunity to score goals that is not contingent upon moving past a predetermined game space. The soccer board game described herein may include one or more sets or decks of chance cards along with action spaces marked so as to indicate from which deck a card should be drawn. For example, in the illustrated embodiment of Figure 1, "LINESMAN'S WHISTLE" spaces 20a-20d are provided, which when landed on by a player's game piece direct the player to choose a chance card from a first deck of chance cards stipulating offensive based actions. Similarly, "REFEREE'S WHISTLE" spaces 25a-25d are provided, which when landed on by a player's game piece direct the player to choose a chance card from a second deck of chance cards stipulating defensive based actions.

Certain chance cards may represent as yellow cards, red cards, and injury cards, which when chosen can each negatively affect game play for the player who chooses such cards. For example, players may choose chance cards representing "yellow cards" that may e.g. direct a player to move backwards a large number of game spaces, and "red cards" that may e.g. direct the player to move backwards a

large number of game spaces and to remove the player token from the next team space they land on that they also occupy. As with the yellow and red cards, injury cards may also direct a current player to remove a player token from the next team space they land on and that they also occupy. Moreover, the effect of yellow cards, red cards, and injury cards may further be contingent upon which area or zone of the game board the player's game piece is located when the player draws the respective card. For example, in response to a player choosing a chance card, the player may instantly be awarded a goal if the player's game piece is located within a "penalty kick" zone, whereas the player may be directed to move a number of spaces if the player's game piece is not located within the "penalty kick" zone. In one embodiment, the game board (10) is divided into four location zones with each zone corresponding to a side of the game board. In the illustrated embodiment, the location zones include two "red card" sides (30a, 30b) a "free kick and yellow card" side (34), and a "penalty kick and yellow card" side (36).

15 In one embodiment, soccer players that are removed from the playing field due to an injury may be replaced on the field by a substitute soccer player. That is, in one embodiment player tokens that are removed from game spaces due to an injury card being drawn by a corresponding player are immediately replaced with a substitute token assuming all of the substitute tokens allocated to the player haven't previously been deployed. In one embodiment a substitute token may be deployed onto any open team space that the player's game piece subsequently lands on including the same game space that the player token was removed from, so long as the total number of player tokens deployed on the game board at any given time

does not exceed 11. In one embodiment, if a player token is removed as a result of a player choosing a red card, the player is not allowed to immediately replace that player token with a substitute token. However, the player may deploy a remaining player token (whether a regular token or substitute token) on that space if it is landed
 5 on by the player's game piece during a subsequent turn. In one embodiment, once a player's substitute tokens have all been deployed, the player may not substitute for any players subsequently removed from the game board.

Examples of linesman's whistle and referee's whistle cards that may be used within the soccer board game are illustrated below:

10 LINESMAN'S WHISTLE

1. FORWARD TO NEXT OWN SPACE
2. FORWARD TO NEXT OPPONENT'S SPACE-3.
3. FORWARD TO NEXT REST SPACE
4. FORWARD TO NEXT OPEN SPACE
- 15 5. FORWARD TO CLOSER OF REST OR OPEN SPACE
6. GOAL
7. CORNER KICK: FORWARD 4 SPACES
8. FREE KICK: GOAL ON FREE KICK SIDE OR MOVE FORWARD 3 SPACES
9. OFFSIDES: BACKWARD 4 SPACES
- 20 10. YELLOW CARD IF YELLOW CARD SIDE & BACKWARD 8 SPACES. IF 2ND YELLOW CARD, NEXT OWN PLAYER SENT OFF
11. PENALTY KICK: GOAL ON PENALTY KICK SIDE OR MOVE FORWARD 6 SPACES
12. INJURY CARD: NEXT OWN PLAYER OUT IF INJURY SPACE OR MISS ONE TURN

25 REFEREE'S WHISTLE

1. BACKWARD TO CLOSEST OWN SPACE
2. BACKWARD TO CLOSEST REST SPACE
3. BACKWARD TO CLOSEST OPEN SPACE
4. BACKWARD TO CLOSEST OPPONENT'S SPACE
- 30 5. BACKWARD TO CLOSER OF REST OR OPEN SPACE
6. OFFSIDES: FORWARD 4 SPACES
7. GOAL KICK: FORWARD 5 SPACES
8. CORNER KICK: BACKWARD 4 SPACES
9. FREE KICK: OPPONENT'S GOAL IF FREE KICK SIDE OR MOVE BACKWARD 3 SPACES
- 35 10. PENALTY KICK: OPPONENT'S GOAL IF PENALTY KICK SIDE OR MOVE BACKWARD 8 SPACES
11. INJURY CARD: NEXT OWN PLAYER OUT IF INJURY SPACE OR MISS ONE TURN

12. YELLOW CARD IF YELLOW CARD SIDE & BACKWARD 8 SPACES. IF 2ND YELLOW CARD, NEXT OWN PLAYER SENT OFF
13. RED CARD ON NEXT OWN PLAYER IF RED CARD SIDE AND BACKWARD 10 SPACES

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EXAMPLE GAME PIECE MOVEMENT

Figures 2A-2B illustrate various team space occupation and corresponding game piece movement scenarios, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention. In each of Figures 2A-2B, eight example games spaces (A-H) are shown.

- 10 Of the eight game spaces, four spaces are team spaces (B, C, E, H) and four spaces are action spaces (A, D, F, G). Furthermore, two action spaces (A, F) are REST spaces indicating that no action need be taken by a player, one action space is a LINESMAN'S WHISTLE space (D) directing players to choose an offensive chance card, and one action space (G) is an OFFSIDES space directing players to
- 15 move their game piece backward by 5 spaces.

- In Figure 2A, "regular" player tokens (16) are deployed on team spaces C and E and a regular opponent token (17) is deployed on team space H. Assuming the outcome of a first player's roll of a die is "2", the first player will move their game piece (18) to team space C. Because game space C is occupied by the first player's
- 20 own player token (16), the first player continues to move their game piece two additional spaces as determined by the movement indicia (22) associated with team space C. Once again, because team space E is also occupied by the player's own regular token (16), the first player continues to move their game piece (18) successively forward to team space H. However, since team space H is occupied
- 25 by an opponent player's regular token (17), the first player moves their game piece

successively backward to team space F, which is a REST space. At this point the first player's turn ends.

In Figure 2B, the same eight game spaces are shown as were illustrated in Figure 2A, except in Figure 2B, team space E is occupied by an opponent player's regular token (17) rather than the first player's regular token (16). As a result, at the end of the first player's turn, their game piece (18) ends up on team space B rather than four games spaces forward on team space F as was the outcome in Figure 2A. Thus it can readily be seen that the mere change of possession of a single team space can change the resulting position of a player's game piece. Additionally, because team space B is not occupied by any player tokens (e.g. is open), the first player is given the option of occupying team space B assuming they have additional player tokens remaining to be deployed.

EXAMPLE GAME PLAY

Although there may be many variations of game play available in the soccer board game described herein, one representative game play flow is now described for the purposes of example. In the example, the soccer board game is played by two players who each move their own game piece around the game board. At the start, the game pieces are positioned at goal space (15), which when passed by a game piece causes a corresponding player to score a goal. The players proceed in turn to move their respective game pieces around the perimeter of the game board (10) in a clockwise fashion.

To begin the game, a player uses a die to determine an initial number of spaces to move their game piece. Although in the present example, a single die is

used, it is considered to be within the scope of the invention that any other chance device may be used. For example, other such chance devices may include but are not limited to, multiple dice, spinners and electronically generated random numbers (in the case of a computer implemented version of the soccer board game). In

5 response to the outcome of the die, the player then moves their game piece the appropriate number of spaces on the game board.

When the game piece lands on an open team space, the player may deploy a star token or a regular token on that space. The next time the player's own game piece lands on this space, the player will move their game piece forward as many
10 spaces as the movement indicia (e.g. number) on the team space indicates. That is unless a star token has been deployed on the team space, in which case, the player moves their game piece forward double the number of spaces as that indicated.

Conversely, the next time the opponent's game piece lands on this team space, the opponent will move their game piece backward by as many spaces as indicated by
15 the movement indicia. That is, unless a star token has been deployed, in which case, the opponent will move their game piece backward by double the indicated number of spaces. In one embodiment, a player's game piece is not allowed to move farther back than the starting space (e.g. in this case the goal space) and a goal cannot be scored by landing on the starting space when moving backward.

20 When a player's game piece lands on a space marked "LINESMAN'S WHISTLE" or "REFEREE'S WHISTLE", the respective player chooses a chance card, takes the action indicated on the card, and then replaces the card at the bottom of the pile. Again, a player will never move farther back than start arrow.

The player continues to move their respective game piece backward or forward on the game board until their game piece lands on a REST space, OPEN space, LINESMAN'S WHISTLE space, REFEREE'S WHISTLE space, or other space that does not result in any action besides drawing a card. If a player lands on
5 an open space they may then choose to place a player token on an open space at the end of a turn. In the present example, offensive goals can be scored by: a) a player's game piece landing on or passing the "Goal" space or another designated game space as a result of moving forward; b) selecting a "Free Kick" LINESMAN'S WHISTLE card if own game piece is on the "Free Kick Side"; c) selecting a "Penalty
10 Kick" LINESMAN'S WHISTLE card if own game piece is on the "Penalty Kick Side"; d) moving past the designated "Goal" space when directed by a LINESMAN'S WHISTLE card or a REFEREE'S WHISTLE card; and e) choosing a chance card indicating a scored Goal.

In the present example, defensive Goals can be allowed by: a) selecting a
15 "Free Kick" chance card REFEREE'S WHISTLE card when opponent is on the "Free Kick Side"; and b) selecting a "Penalty Kick" REFEREE'S WHISTLE card when opponent is on the "Penalty Kick Side".

If LINESMAN'S WHISTLE or REFEREE'S WHISTLE Injury Card is selected and the game piece corresponding to the player selecting the card is located on a
20 space that says "INJURY CARD: NEXT OWN PLAYER OUT", the player receives an INJURY MARKER. Furthermore, the next time the player lands on an occupied one of their own team spaces, the corresponding player token is removed from the game board (e.g. the Soccer player is considered injured and taken off of the playing

field) for the remainder of match. Furthermore, the player's turn ends at that spot. A substitute token must then replace the removed player token immediately if the player's substitute tokens are not already deployed elsewhere. If no substitute tokens are available, the player plays with one fewer player tokens.

- 5 If player selects a red card from e.g. the REFEREE'S WHISTLE card pile while the player's game piece is positioned in one of the two RED CARD SIDE zones (30a, 30b), the player receives a red card marker and takes the action designated on the chance card. Additionally, the next team space landed on and occupied by the player results in the player's player token being removed from the
- 10 game board (e.g. Soccer player being sent off the field) without a substitute replacement being allowed. Furthermore, the player does not move forward and the player's turn ends at this point.

- If a player selects a yellow card from e.g. the LINESMAN'S WHISTLE card pile while the player's game piece is positioned in one of the two YELLOW CARD
- 15 SIDE zones (34, 36), the player receives a yellow card marker and takes the action designated on the card. If a player receives two yellow cards, they have to remove the their player token from the next team space they encounter that they also possess. As with the red card, no substitutes are available, the player does not move forward, and the player's turn ends at this point. However, a new player token
- 20 belonging to the player maybe deployed on this team space if the team space is landed upon again during another of the player's turns. If a player draws a chance card directing a player to move their game piece forward or backward to their own or

an opponent's team space and there are no player tokens deployed on the game board, the player moves to the nearest forward or backward open space.

If, by chance, the manner in which player tokens are deployed results in a player's game token being left in a continuous loop, that player's turn stops at the
5 point on the game board that is part of the continuous loop that is the farthest forward.

EPILOGUE

As will be evident to those familiar with board game play, although the rules
10 and associated game play described herein suggests one or more methods of play, other methods of play may nonetheless be practiced without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, although the game spaces are described and illustrated as being disposed around the perimeter of the game board, the game spaces may nonetheless be disposed in any pattern, whether geometric or
15 otherwise. Similarly, player tokens may take any physical or virtual form including both two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms.